

A Short History of Russia

Henry William Little



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A SHORT
HISTORY OF RUSSIA.

BY
THE REV. HENRY W. LITTLE,
AUTHOR OF "MADAGASCAR: ITS HISTORY AND PEOPLE," "HOW TO
SAVE EGYPT," &c., &c.



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CONTENTS.

SOVEREIGNS OF RUSSIA	I.
CHIEF EVENTS AND DATES IN RUSSIAN HISTORY	II.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. RURIC THE NORMAN	6
III. PETER THE GREAT—CATHERINE I.—PETER II.—ANN—IVAN IV.—ELIZABETH— PETER III.	12
IV. CATHERINE II.—PAUL—ALEXANDER I. ...	19
V. NICHOLAS—THE CRIMEAN WAR	30
VI. SOCIAL NOTES	41
VII. ALEXANDER II.—PEACE—CORONATION ..	52
VIII. ALEXANDER II.—EMANCIPATION OF SERFS —ASSASSINATION OF THE CZAR	61
IX. SKETCHES OF ST. PETERSBURG—MOSCOW— NIZNI NOVGOROD	71
X. EXTENSION OF THE EMPIRE	92
XI. ALEXANDER III.—NIHILISM	100
INDEX	109

I.

SOVEREIGNS OF RUSSIA.

A.D.					A.D.
1689	...	...	PETER I.	Died 28th Jan.,	1725
1725	...	...	CATHERINE I.	...	1727
1727	...	...	PETER II.	...	1730
1730	...	...	... ANN ...	...	1740
1740	IVAN IV.	Imprisoned 1741,	Assassinated	1764	
1741	...	...	ELIZABETH.	Died Jan. 5th,	1762
1762	...	...	PETER III.	Assassinated	1762
			CATHERINE II.	...	1796
1796	...	...	PAUL.	Assassinated	1801
1801	...	...	ALEXANDER I.	...	1825
1825	...	...	NICHOLAS.	...	1855
1855	...	...	ALEXANDER II.	Assassinated	1881
1881	...	...	ALEXANDER III.	...	(Reigning)

II.

CHIEF EVENTS AND DATES IN RUSSIAN HISTORY.

	A.D.
RURIC THE NORMAN	850
TARTAR INVASION	1250
IVAN THE GREAT	1462
MICHAEL ROMANOFF (founder of present Dynasty)	1613
PETER THE GREAT	1689
AZOF TAKEN FROM THE TURKS... ..	1694
PETER DECLARES HIMSELF HEAD OF THE CHURCH—ASSUMES TITLE OF EMPEROR AND AUTOCRAT OF ALL THE RUSSIAS	1701
DISEMEMBERMENT OF POLAND	1795
DEFEAT OF RUSSIA BY NAPOLEON AT FRIEDLAND	1807
CONQUEST OF FINLAND	1809
INVASION OF RUSSIA—FALL OF MOSCOW AND RETREAT OF FRENCH	1812
INVASION OF TURKEY BY RUSSIA—TREATY OF ADRIANOPLE	1829
FIRST RUSSIAN ADVANCE ON INDIA	1838
"THE MENSCHIKOFF NOTE"	1853
TURKEY DECLARES WAR AGAINST RUSSIA, Sept. 26th, ,, ENGLAND AND FRANCE DECLARE WAR AGAINST RUSSIA	1854
FALL OF SEBASTOPOL	1856
PEACE PROCLAIMED March 30th, ,,	
EMANCIPATION OF THE SERFS	1861
ASSASSINATION OF ALEXANDER II. BY NIHILISTS	1881
THE PENJ-DEH INCIDENT April, 1885	

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

THE centre of military and political interest has suddenly and completely shifted from the arid deserts of the Soudan to the distant frontiers of Afghanistan, from Khartoum to Herat ; and recent events in Central Asia have awakened a great curiosity, not only in England but throughout Europe, with respect to Russia and all things Russian.

A concise record, therefore, of the chief facts and most stirring incidents of Russian history, from the earliest times, will be welcomed by the great body of the people, who have neither time nor means to consult larger and more expensive volumes.

The popular knowledge of the illimitable Empire of the Czars is strangely meagre, in spite of the constant intercourse between ourselves and Russia for centuries past.

There is probably no subject of equal importance, upon which the great mass of the British public are so ill-informed.

It has been truly remarked by an eminent man of letters, that English travellers and authors are the best and the worst in the world. Where no motives of national interest or pride intervene, their descriptions and records are unequalled for force and truthfulness. But when the reputation or interests of their own country bring them into collision with those of other nations, they go to the opposite extreme, and, flinging aside their usual probity and candour, adopt a splenetic tone or an illiberal and intolerant spirit of haughty ridicule.

Many recent volumes on the Eastern Question are not free from these blemishes of style and taste. Their facts are often as inaccurate as their deductions are fanciful.

If authentic dates and names are the very vertebra of historical statement, naked veracity is its vital and energising breath.

For *extent of area*, Russia stands (next to the British Empire) without a rival amongst the nations of the world.

She occupies exactly one-half of Europe. She rules a third part of Asia. Her territory sweeps in unbroken continuity half-way round the globe, and her flag dominates one-seventh of the entire land-surface of the earth. Her entire superficial area is thirty times that of England. It is interesting to notice that, of the four great continents of the world, Africa has alone remained untouched by the Muscovite power. Russian trade with England during 1883 amounted to over £28,000,000: its exports were (1882) £129,000,000; its imports (1882) about the same amount as the exports. The entire population of all nationalities reaches to above 100,000,000.

The majority of the people are Greek Catholics (60,000,000). There are about 7,000,000 Roman Catholics, the same number of Mohammedans, 2,000,000 Protestants, and the same number of Jews.

Eight distinct nationalities are absorbed in the Russian nation :—Russ, Poles, Fins, Jews, Germans, Lithuanians, Baschkives and Turks.

The great problem which each monarch in succession has set himself to solve has been the welding of these diverse and alien elements into a united and harmonious whole. So far, however, complete success has not crowned their efforts in this direction. Russia remains discontented, sullen, and disunited. It is true that during the past three centuries she has made enormous and praiseworthy advances towards freedom and enlightenment. She is still, however, far behind the rest of the Great European States in commercial prosperity and social unity and comfort. Her resources are tardily developed, the various classes of the community distrust each other, and the cultivation of art, science, and literature progresses but slowly within her borders.

The unique form of government known

as Czarism, which is in reality an autocratic and absolute monarchy, is responsible for this untoward condition of things.

By Czarism, the person of the Emperor is surrounded by a halo of hereditary sanctity; and by a sagacious blending of the sacerdotal and political elements of his position, a respect is secured for his decrees and every wish which would never be possible otherwise.

The origin and development of this essentially Russian institution will be very briefly discussed in a future chapter.

CHAPTER II.

RURIC THE NORMAN.

RUSSIAN history commences with our Saxon era. In the early dawn of our national civilisation, when Egbert of Wessex was gathering into one the several kingdoms of the Heptarchy, and thus laying the foundation-stone of England's future greatness (A.D. 850), the people of Central Russia were barbarians, crushed down beneath the tyrannical rule of a Norman pirate, RURIC by name.

The oppressor had been invited by the Novgorodians to assist them in opposing an invasion of their borders by a rapacious tribe from the south.

Ruric, whose sagacity was equal to his rude valour and boundless ambition, immediately grasped the opportunity which his position afforded him to establish a dynasty,

and thus acquire for himself immortal fame. After the manner of his kind, he at once seized upon the most fertile districts, proclaimed a paramount Norman authority, centring in himself, and gave his own name to the subjugated region, which has ever since been known as the land of the Russ (Ruric).

The internal condition of the country, under the rule of this self-imposed monarch and his descendants, curiously resembled that of Britain during the Saxon and Danish periods.

The supreme power remained for several centuries with the family of the Norman sea-king. The country was, however, gradually broken up into principalities, the result of successive divisions of the ancestral patrimony amongst the descendants of Ruric and his brother. Murderous family feuds at length burst forth, however, and these domestic disturbances opened the way for fresh invaders.

About the middle of the thirteenth cen-

ture, fierce Tartar hordes burst like a flood through the passes of the Urals, and across the Caspian sea westward over the plains of Europe.

The southern and eastern provinces of Russia were completely overwhelmed by successive waves of Tartar aggression. The power of the dynasty of Ruric was, for the time, effectually weakened by these savage nomads, who, for nearly three hundred years, maintained a terrible supremacy from the Neva to the Caucasus.

Goaded beyond endurance by the misery and ignominy of their position as bondsmen of the Tartars, the people rose at length as one man, and, by almost superhuman efforts, drove their enemies across the frontiers back into Asia.

IVAN THE GREAT, a name destined to become distinguished in European history, a lineal descendant of Ruric, assumed the royal dignity (1462), took the title of Czar, announced himself to the Courts of Europe as an independent prince, and Russia was

for the first time admitted to a place amongst the nations.

At this time England was suffering from the horrors of a prolonged internecine war, and the country was ringing with the battle-cries of the rival houses of York and Lancaster.

The period was pregnant with events of the first importance.

Constantinople, a city esteemed as sacred by the superstitious Russians, had been wrested from the Grecian Empire by the Ottoman Turks. The hated Crescent replaced the revered Eagle upon the dome of the majestic cathedral-church of St. Sophia.

This deplorable blow to the prestige of the once-supreme empire of the East did not deter Ivan from uniting himself in the closest bonds of affinity with the royal family of Greece.

His marriage with the niece of the last of the successors of Alexander caused intense delight throughout Russia; and when Ivan

adopted as the symbol of his authority the two-headed eagle, which had hitherto been the well-known emblem of the ancient but fast-waning Grecian power, the act was hailed with satisfaction by all his subjects.

This alliance of Ivan the Great with the regal house of Greece, marked an era in the history of his country, and has exercised an influence upon the "Eastern Question" up to the present time.

By the union of these two royal and illustrious houses, a *prima facie* claim was established for Ivan and his descendants to be regarded as the rightful successors of the old Greek emperors to the coveted city of Constantine.

Politicians and students of history are quite familiar with the fact that from time to time this claim has been advanced to defend the unwearied efforts, covert or open, which Russia has been making in the centuries past, upon various specious pretexts, to secure a footing within the Turkish frontiers and to establish herself,

if possible, within the walls and beneath
the gilded minarets of the Ottoman
capital.

CHAPTER III.

PETER THE GREAT—CATHERINE I. —PETER II. —
ANN—IVAN IV.—ELIZABETH—PETER III.

THE dynasty of Ruric reached the summit of its glory in the person of Ivan the Great. With his death it came to an end. There was no legitimate heir to succeed to the Russian imperial honours, and in 1613 Michael Romanoff, the ancestor of the present reigning house, was chosen by the popular vote to fill the vacant throne.

The fifth monarch of the prolific line of Romanoff was PETER the First, who is regarded as the founder of the greatness of his country, the Father and Legislator of his people, and whose memory is venerated to day in the lowliest cottage upon the most desolate and distant steppe of the Muscovite dominions. Ascending the throne in 1682, his name soon became a household word

throughout the whole of Europe. His extraordinary perseverance, his sagacity, his energy, his intellectual power, and his remarkable individuality and force of character, together with his quaint devices to find out the needs and opinions of his people, and his utter disregard of courtly observances, are familiar to all readers of history.

He inaugurated his reign with an attack upon the Turks, and captured Azof from them in 1694. Whilst visiting England, he was suddenly recalled to crush out a formidable mutiny amongst his troops. This he did most effectively by disbanding the disloyal regiments and executing in cold blood two thousand of the ringleaders, some of these perishing by the hand of the Czar himself: it is said that he was even delighted at the adroit manner in which he performed this undignified task. In 1701 the pretensions of the Clerical party were mercilessly set aside by Peter, who declared himself the supreme head of the Church in

Russia, and who emphasised this step by at once suppressing the ancient dignity of the patriarchate of Moscow.

This valiant and fearless prince was several times worsted in battle by his equally valiant antagonist Charles XII. of Sweden; but at length he was able, by superior tactics and consummate strategy, finally to break the military power of that illustrious warrior at Pultowa. Pursuing Charles, "that heroic madman," into Turkish territory, he was himself in peril of death and his army of complete extinction. The Emperor and his soldiers were, however, delivered from the power of the Turks by the readiness of resource and firm affection of his Empress, Catherine. This heroic and devoted woman followed her husband through all his campaigns, and cheerfully submitted to the severe privations incident to a life of danger and uncertainty. Her history is full of pathetic incidents. A natural daughter of a forsaken peasant-girl, she was taken out of charity into the house

of a Lutheran minister at Marienburg. Her early years were passed as a servant in the family, which she ultimately quitted to marry a trooper of the Swedish army.

Marienburg falling before the victorious arms of Peter, the inhabitants were taken prisoners and sent into the Russian camp. Catherine was amongst the captives. Her husband had perished during the assault upon the town. The beauty of the girl attracted the attention of Bauer, a general of division, who took her as his mistress. She soon, however, passed into the household of Prince Menschikoff, who had become enamoured of the peasant-maiden. It is said that the Czar happened to meet her quite by accident. She was elevated at once to regal honour, having so far won his esteem, by her nobility of character and becoming manners, that he made her his lawful wife. On his death, she succeeded to the imperial purple as Catherine I. Her shrewdness and thorough knowledge of character are shown by the means she

adopted to release the army of her husband when surrounded at Jassy by the Ottoman forces.

Peter, having failed in his repeated attempts to break through the Turkish lines, withdrew into solitude and sat brooding over his reverses in a spirit of hopeless despair. He had fixed a guard round his tent, and had forbidden anyone to enter. Catherine, risking his displeasure, made her way to him and found him in a convulsion brought on by excess of despondency.

With a woman's tact and hopefulness she succeeded in calming his extreme agitation, and suggested, most prudently, a treaty with the enemy.

Taking her jewels and all the costly ornaments she could gather together, she sent them as a gift to the officer of the Sultan's troops, and secured a safe retreat for the Muscovite hosts from the dominions of their hereditary foes.

Peter founded a navy, reformed the internal economy of the country, and

considerably advanced his people in the knowledge of the useful and domestic arts, whilst maintaining most completely the prestige of his empire beyond his own boundaries.

After an eventful reign of six and thirty years, this monarch, who was the first to adopt the lofty title of Emperor and Autocrat of all the Russias, passed away beloved and mourned as a parent by all ranks of his subjects.

The succeeding reigns of CATHERINE I. (1725) and PETER II. (1727) were in no way remarkable.

Tartary became tributary to Russia in the reign of ANN (1730).

IVAN IV. (who was assassinated in 1764) and ELIZABETH (the accomplished daughter of Peter the Great) added nothing of importance to the records of their country.

PETER III. (1762) was at least three centuries in advance of his times in mind and heart.

With a too ready zeal for the reforma-

tion of his empire and the advancement of his people, he in the most summary manner proceeded to work out changes both in Church and State. He suppressed the application of torture in criminal proceedings, he drew up new and useful regulations for the control of home-commerce, and he scarcely left any department of the government or district of the country untouched by his reforming hand. The people refused to go with their monarch in his perpetual efforts to alter everything about him, and he was cruelly assassinated on July 14th, 1762, after a brief and troubled reign of six months.

This unfortunate monarch was succeeded by his widow, the renowned CATHERINE II., who was suspected, and not without good cause, of having secret sympathies with the destroyers of her ill-fated husband.

CHAPTER IV.

CATHERINE II.—PAUL.—ALEXANDER I.

THE reign of Catherine II. is one of the most extraordinary on record. She was a woman of marvellous force of character, clever, designing, with unbounded aspirations, and as unprincipled as she was talented.

Her infamously-libidinous nature, allied to brilliant gifts of polity and government, have marked her out as one of the most prominent and familiar figures of European history. Such were the energy and resolution with which she conducted the affairs of her empire, that she was able to inaugurate by her personal influence alone that restless and insatiable policy of inordinate aggression which has, ever since her time, been a marked feature of Russian diplomacy, as well as a disturbing element at all times in Eastern politics.

Catherine entered upon terrible and devastating wars, in which thousands of lives were sacrificed with joyous avidity. She loved to hear the crash of military music, and to be surrounded by uniforms and the grim implements of conflict.

She soon found an excuse to attack the Turks, whom she regarded with implacable animosity. Time after time she engaged the Ottoman forces, with her own well-drilled armies, and always with success.

Her victorious hosts traversed the rich provinces of Moldavia and Wallachia, and drained them completely of their resources, leaving them impoverished and bare even of the necessaries of life.

The navy of Russia, under the fostering care of the Czarina, assumed formidable proportions, and the black eagle at the masthead of her ships of war cleared the waters of the Baltic of hostile fleets, and proclaimed its prowess in a most signal manner by the total destruction of the Turkish fleet in its own waters.

Terrible atrocities attended the operations of Catherine's triumphant battalions. The bloody scenes of rapine and carnage which were enacted at Ismail, at Potemskia, and Suwarrow are still remembered everywhere with horror and disgust. Poland was dismembered at this period, its nationality destroyed, and its territories added to the Empire of Russia. Byron, in "Don Juan," deals mercilessly with the blemishes of this Empress's life. His picture of her conduct and manner of life is, however, by no means exaggerated. She changed her male favourites at will. She bestowed upon them high offices of State, which in a moment of caprice she again took from them. Her word was law. Few dared to offend her either in domestic or public affairs. But she had some eminently agreeable and praiseworthy traits of character. She was an authoress and a devoted patroness of literature, and her conversation was graceful, impressive, and full of shrewd common sense.

The Emperor PAUL succeeded his mother in 1796. He had been thoroughly hated by his unnatural parent. He had been neglected from childhood, and was often made an object of derision by his mother in public. The people maintained that Paul was not really a son of the late Czarina, but a Finnish foundling. His conduct was by no means royal or commendable. He soon alienated from himself the sympathies and respect of his subjects. He was capricious, wasteful, eccentric in speech and action, and withal a ferocious tyrant. He joined in the European league against France, and then, turning his back upon his allies, entered into a solemn treaty of friendship with Napoleon Bonaparte. He was just entering upon a war with England when he was murdered in his own palace by a body of confederates who had pledged themselves to rid the country of the "mad monarch," as Paul had come to be designated by his people.

He left four sons—Alexander, who succeeded him; the Grand Duke Constantine, who died in 1831; the Emperor Nicholas, grandfather of the present Czar; and the Grand Duke Michael, who died in 1849.

ALEXANDER I. (1801) reversed the fanatic policy of his father.

He concluded a treaty of friendship and commerce with Great Britain, and disbanded an army of 45,000 Cossacks which his demented predecessor had assembled, with a view to an invasion and occupation of British India.

This was the first hostile movement through Central Asia on the part of Russia in the direction of our Eastern possessions. Pursuing his judicious and timely policy, Alexander declined to regard Napoleon as a duly-elected sovereign, and entered into an alliance, offensive and defensive, with Austria against the adventurous Corsican. Napoleon gave battle to the two Emperors on the famous field of Austerlitz (1805), and, after a brilliant engagement, succeeded

in routing completely the enormous armies of the allies. The Russians again occupied Moldavia and Wallachia in 1806, but they were defeated with fearful slaughter and their advance was effectually checked by the "Scourge of Europe," at the battle of Friedland (1807). Napoleon and Alexander met upon a roughly-extemporised raft on the river near Tilsit, and a treaty of peace and amity was decided upon.

The crafty Frenchman opened out his scheme for the division of Europe between Alexander and himself, but there was a difficulty about the division of the spoil.

In 1809, Finland was annexed by Alexander to his rapidly-increasing dominions, having been wrenched by force of arms from the noble and generous Gustavus of Sweden. The old policy of aggression against Turkey was now revived. After a series of battles, Turkey retired from the conflict, bereft of Bessarabia.

Alexander refused to be a party to the closing of all the ports of Europe against

England, a design suggested by Napoleon for the crippling this country by injuring her commerce. Hostilities broke out in consequence of this righteous decision of the Czar, and in the autumn of 1812 Napoleon invaded Russia, with an army of half a million of carefully-selected soldiers, to chastise and humiliate his old antagonist.

The passage of this vast host across Europe created a profound sensation. The battle of Borodino was fought, and ten thousand French and fifteen thousand Russian soldiers were slain, whilst the masses of wounded were too great to be counted. The French were the conquerors. Flushed with triumph, Napoleon pressed onward to Moscow, the holy city of Russia, and the centre of its national and religious life. He established himself in the ancient regal domicile—half-cathedral, half-castle—of the Kremlin, to the intense horror and vexation of the vanquished nation. This city is situated in the very centre of the Empire, and was the seat of power of the Dukes of Moscow, who held

a kind of supremacy over the divided States which were governed by the descendants of Ruric previous to and during the Mongol invasion, and down to the accession to the royal dignity of the house of Romanoff. In it the wealthy and noble families all have residences. The Kremlin has been described as at once a cathedral, a castle, a palace, and a fortress. Its gigantic proportions, its antiquated and strange mixture of architectural styles, its walls sixteen feet thick and from thirty to sixty feet high, its battlements, its towers, and its gates combine to give it a formidable appearance from whatever point it is seen. It has been called the "Mont Blanc of fortresses." A traveller thus describes his visit to the famous citadel:—"I have been over the public gardens planted upon the glaciers of the old stronghold of the Czars. I beheld towers, then other towers; flights of walls, and then other flights; and my eyes wandered over an enchanted city. It is saying too little to call it fairyland." Within the walls of the

Kremlin, which is itself a city, there are really four separate cathedrals, and thirty-two churches or oratories. Within the Cathedral of St. Michael are contained the tombs of all the Czars and Empresses from Peter the Great. Moscow is the industrial centre of Russia, the Manchester of the Empire. Within a few hours of the arrival of the French within the walls of Moscow, the city was enveloped in flames, and the invaders were obliged to vacate the burning capital in the depth of one of the most terrible winters ever experienced. The retreat of Napoleon and his army is one of the most harrowing incidents of modern military history. Decimated by cold and want, half-buried in drifts and storms of snow, nine-tenths of the vast host perished on the road homeward to France. Napoleon was himself thoroughly crushed and humiliated by this crowning disaster to his magnificent troops. Alexander revenged himself amply by entering Paris in triumph shortly after Bonaparte had been thus vanquished.

Russia, after the decline of Napoleon, became the head of the Holy Alliance, a kind of union between Austria, Prussia, France and herself for the crushing out of all tendencies to revolutionary action throughout the Continent. In spite, however, of the alliance, a strong feeling in favour of constitutional as opposed to autocratical government has continued to spread over Europe. Alexander even in his time saw with alarm that despotism was abhorrent to the great mass of his own subjects, and he felt that, unless changes were speedily brought about in the matter of government, his own life would be in danger.

With the haughty stubbornness of his race, he held on his imperious and unwise course of despotism. He personally controlled all the fiscal and political arrangements of the empire, and refused to take counsel with his people upon any matter, however vital might be their concern in it. He died suddenly, at the early age of 48, it is generally supposed by violence; and, in

a secret document which was found after his death, he declared that Nicholas, and not Constantine (the next in succession by birth) was to succeed him.

Constantine did not dispute the arrangement, and, although a rebellion in his favour was organised, it was speedily and effectually and sternly crushed by the prompt action of the new Czar.

CHAPTER V.

NICHOLAS.—THE CRIMEAN WAR.

A NEW and important page of Russian history opens with the accession of Nicholas to the throne of the Romanoffs. He had already formed an important alliance by his marriage with the sister of the Emperor of Germany (then King of Prussia) in 1817, and was crowned, in the citadel of the Kremlin at Moscow, with due solemnity, as Czar of all the Russias in 1826. In the following year he assumed the crown of Poland. The new Czar found, however, that it would require the exercise of all his energy to retain possession of this newly-acquired dependency of his vast empire. Constantine, his brother, had been appointed to the supreme command of the army of occupation, and harsh and imperious rule soon roused the warlike spirit of the Poles, who rose in rebellion against the alien power.

The outbreak was crushed by the most detestable cruelty and the most wanton savagery on the part of the Cossacks of the Don, to whom the duty of reconquering Poland had been entrusted. It has been truly said that "the history of this horrible campaign should be written in letters of blood and fire." Thousands of miserable Poles were driven in gangs across the sterile wastes and frozen steppes to labour for life in the mines of Siberia, and the nationality of Poland was finally merged in that of Russia by a special edict of Nicholas. In 1828 a Russian army once more entered Turkey, and seized upon Adrianople, for no particular reason except that the Czar appeared unable to restrain for any length of time that lust for aggression upon the territory of his unfortunate neighbours which has been the distinguishing characteristic of Muscovite policy ever since the foundation of the empire.

A treaty signed at Adrianople in 1829 gave to the empire several valuable

fortresses in the Black Sea and the *protectorate* of two of the most valuable provinces of northern Turkey.

This treaty dealt a serious blow at Turkish independence from which it has never recovered. From this period we may date the gradual decline of Turkish power, and the rise of those ever-recurring complications and troubles which have continued to environ and distress the government of the Ottoman Porte. "Extension of area" was the motto of Nicholas. The attempt of a Persian force, led by his officers, to seize Herat in 1838 was suspiciously and anxiously watched by Great Britain, as it was felt even then that any indication of an advance of Russia in that direction was to be taken as a menace to our authority in India and the East. That the invasion of Hindostan proper was an idea even then of Russian policy there can be no doubt. The overthrow of the Persian force and the subsequent conquest of Afghanistan by

the British arms set the matter at rest, however, for the time.

In person Nicholas was a man of gigantic stature—six feet three inches high, with a great breadth of chest and shoulder. His features were regular, and after the Greek model. He was collected, serene, and haughty in demeanour. His sharp, powerful glance is said to have exercised a spell over those who were brought within its range. He was delighted when he saw that he was feared. “His mouth sometimes smiled, his lips never—they were cold, stern, unsympathetic as those of the fabled sphinx of Thebes.” He was described, however, strange to say, as a kind father and husband, in spite of his gross immorality and neglect of the common decencies of private life. He treated all foreigners with great courtesy, as he was anxious for the goodwill of other countries ; but to his own people he was a tyrant merciless and unrelenting. He was naturally hard and unsympathetic, and often attended in

person the execution of military offenders. It is said that he never revoked a sentence, and that he was a great supporter of the "knout," one of the most terrible and diabolical punishments ever devised by human ingenuity. That he was a despot of the worst type we must allow, but at the same time it is but fair to say that under his rule the country prospered, the condition of the people improved, and the cultivation of arts and manufactures was encouraged and developed. Nicholas acted from a mistaken but strict sense of duty. Doubtless the subjects over whom he exercised dominion, required to be governed by an iron hand, which might, with advantage to both ruler and ruled, have been covered with a velvet glove. As a fact, "Nicholas had the iron hand, but he had forgotten the velvet glove."

It has been said of him, by one who knew him intimately, that "he distilled mercy slowly and drop by drop, never wholly filling up the cup of pardon."

We now approach a series of events which, even at this distance of time, are of absorbing and melancholy interest to all Englishmen.

Complications had arisen with reference to the custody of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem. Nicholas complained to the Sublime Porte of certain concessions which had been made by the Turkish authorities on the spot in favour, as he maintained, of the Roman as against the Greek Christians at the tomb of Christ. The Czar had always constituted himself the defender of the Greek communion, and he entered into the dispute with keenness, as it afforded him a plausible pretext for a fresh quarrel with Turkey. The matter, however, was arranged, much to his disgust, and then a further and more adroit step was taken to provoke hostilities by the Russians. On the 5th of May in the memorable year 1853, Prince Menschikoff was sent upon a special mission to Constantinople. Upon his arrival at that capital he immediately made

a communication to the Cabinet of the Sultan Abdul-Medjid which was the primary cause of one of the most unhappy and desolating wars of modern times. This document is known in history as "The Menschikoff Note." In it, the Emperor Nicholas demanded a right to exercise authority over all the Greek Christians within the territory of the Sultan. These amounted to about 12 millions of persons, and the request was tantamount at once to a demand for a virtual partition of the Turkish Empire. The demand was, of course, resisted with dignity, but at the same time with strong determination, by the Ottoman Porte. The Russians crossed the Pruth under Prince Gortschakoff on the 25th of June—not to engage in war, they maintained, but to emphasise their demand. The Turkish Government requested the withdrawal of the Russian forces, and, their demand being refused, war was declared by the Sultan, at the instigation of his subjects, on the 4th of October following.

The French were the first to realise their duty as allies of the Porte, and, calling upon England to fulfil her obligations, the representatives of the two great Western Powers left the Russian capital, and the command was given for the concentration of the armies of the Allies upon the shores of the Crimea, March, 1854. It is not our intention here to give the details of the deadly conflict which was waged, with fearful consequences to both sides, between the Allies (Turkey, England, France, and Sardinia) and the Russians in the Crimea and the Baltic till the fall of Sebastopol in February, 1856.

The enormous mental and physical strain placed upon Nicholas by this contest, the gradual absorption of all his resources of men and treasure without tangible results, and the stubborn and unyielding attitude of his enemies, all conduced to weaken his health and humble his saturnine and insatiable pride. Outwardly calm, the viper of disappointed schemes and frustrated

hopes was gnawing at his heart-strings, and on 2nd March, 1855, the morose and haughty monarch died, to the intense relief of all Europe and the profound sorrow of his own superstitious and infatuated people, having occupied the throne for thirty years. The policy of the great Autocrat is thus summed up by a French writer :—" Nicholas desired to stretch forth the powerful hand of Russia upon Europe, to enslave it; to make Germany its vassal, and, if necessary, step over its body to reach the East; to keep the mouth of the Danube as the gates of Austria, and the banks of the Niemen as the entrance to Prussia; to stifle the last palpitations of Poland, so as to prevent the revival of a nationality which protected the South against the North; to place the Baltic and the Black Sea under the sovereignty of the Russian flag floating from the towers of Cronstadt and Sebastopol; to keep the East in check; to weaken Turkey; to exhaust her without killing her; and to await the propitious moment for pouncing

upon that prey so eagerly watched, for a century, by the eagle-eye of the Czars ; to possess the first army and the first navy in the world, so as to be master by land as well as by sea ; to fix a day in the future when the Colossus, combining his giant strides, would boldly cross the Bosphorus and establish himself at the mouth of the Dardanelles, on the shores of that beautiful Mediterranean which was to become a Russian lake ; to universalise the Greek dogma, and make St. Sophia the St. Peter of future centuries ; in a word, to construct a new Roman empire with new Cæsars. Such was the policy of the Emperor Nicholas."

The funds both in London and Paris rose firmly and decidedly on the receipt of the message, by telegraph, announcing the death of the Czar ; peace was talked of as if it was to be an undisputed result of the decease of the arch-disturber of Europe,

The manifesto of the new Sovereign, Alexander II., the eldest son of Nicholas, which he issued on the day of his father's

death, showed that it was to be otherwise. He at once assumed the position and responsibility of the Czardom, and declared that the conflict with the enemies of the empire would be pursued with unflinching vigour. The best opinions had been formed of the magnanimity and generosity of the new Emperor, but it was soon seen that he was powerless to end the war or make overtures for peace. The strife, which happily had become localised and confined to the Crimean peninsula, went on month by month ; and the evil spirit of rapine and bloodthirstiness which had been raised by Nicholas still hovered over the land, and remained to disturb and vex the world.

CHAPTER VI.

SOCIAL NOTES.

THE Greek Church, although established by law and acknowledging the Czar as its head, is by no means the religious mother of all the population.

There are numerous sects of Dissenters; and it has been estimated that at least half the population is secretly, if not openly, hostile to the tenets of the Church. This is a strong statement, but I believe it can be supported by the strongest evidence.

The strongest opponents of the State creed, are a body of Nonconformists who were created by the publication of a new version of the Scriptures. This work had been undertaken, under the patronage of the Patriarch Nikon, in the reign of Alexis (1676). The "Old Believers," the objectors to the revised rendering of the Bible, considered that by

this act they had a proof that the Spirit had departed from the Church, and that the Apostolic succession had been suspended, if not actually lost. They sent their priests for ordination into other countries, and repudiated the acts and teaching of their own ecclesiastics with the utmost vehemence. Peter the Great did much to widen the breach. He proclaimed himself head of the Church and spiritual guardian of 60 millions of the Russian people. The result was that many of the most earnest amongst the Christian populations drifted off and became the centres of small but active and godly communities, which exist and exercise a most useful influence in the country to-day. The Church has failed to meet the needs of the times, and her hold upon the nation is slowly relaxing. The clergy are ignorant and servile, and their education is academical rather than liberal and practical. Exalted as a caste above the heads of the populace, they

naturally look upward to the favour of the Czar and the patronage of the wealthy; and the usual consequences have ensued. "In the present day, the Russian nation is the most believing of Christian people; yet its faith has but little fruit—because when a Church abjures its liberty, it loses its moral efficacy: a slave itself, it only engenders slaves."—(*Marquis de Custine.*) Heedless of the needs of the people and clinging to the dead formalities of the most energising and life-giving of all religious systems, in preference to yielding themselves up to its spirit and its power, the clergy stand in front of every wave of popular feeling and try to suppress the discussion of reforms or the advisability of change; and—most awful of blasphemies!—they do this in the name of Him who came to deliver the poor and him that hath no helper, to release the oppressed, to set at liberty the captive, and to see that they who are in need and necessity have right.

The services are mumbled out in the old Slavonic tongue, which is now a dead language. The reading of the Scriptures is in itself a mere ceremony, conducted with lights and genuflexions, but not so as to inform the people. Perhaps, as has been hinted, the precepts of pure Christianity are not congenial to the abject slaves of a despotism which acknowledges no rights but those it chooses to dispense. The stirring scenes and familiar political lessons of the Old Testament might have a startling effect upon the common people, who might be aroused to make some effort after a higher political and personal liberty than they at present enjoy.

The houses of the peasant classes are usually built of blocks or unhewn logs of pine or fir, and to the north of Moscow they have projecting roofs and picturesque hanging balconies which are often profusely adorned with carved work of superior finish, although executed entirely with the broad axe which is the solitary tool of the Moujik

carpenter. South of Moscow, the houses are thatched with straw, and, being devoid of ornamentation, they have a more common appearance when seen from a distance. When colour is used externally, a dingy yellow is preferred, or a dull reddish brown ; but in some localities the shingle-roofs are painted red and the walls green. The common dwelling, or "isba," is raised some eight or ten feet from the ground, and is approached by a covered staircase outside the house, the space below being devoted to the purposes of a fowl or cow house, &c. The isba has usually three little glazed windows in the gable ; and above it is the small room—likewise under the gable—which, being devoted to the young maidens of the family, plays so prominent a part in the popular songs of the country. The farm buildings surround the dwelling, and a bath is generally attached to the more distinguished houses. Some of the villages also have a common bath supported at the public expense. The furniture of the isba,

which often serves as a kitchen as well as a dwelling-room, usually consists of nothing more than a few rude benches of wood, a few shelves containing the cooking-vessels and the never-failing brass urn, or "samowar," for boiling the water for the favourite beverage—tea.

In the corner opposite the door, in a kind of cupboard, hangs the "ikon," or image, of the tutelary saint of the family, and beneath it the basin at which each member of the household washes morning and evening. The most important piece of furniture, however, is the immense brick stove or oven which occupies a large portion of the apartment, and on which the whole family sleep in winter. To lie stretched in perfect idleness on this stove is considered by the moujik the height of felicity, and from it he discourses to his neighbours and listens in turn to the news which may be circulating in the district, and which may be brought to him by some thoughtful and more active neighbour.

I may say, in this connection, that the Russian loves heat, society, and idleness. The moujik generally is given to agriculture and the breeding of cattle. On the whole, he is industrious, sober, and trustworthy, and not at all the unclean, unkempt, dissolute creature he has often been represented to be. The experience which Western travellers gain of this class of the Czar's subjects is chiefly acquired in the large towns, where the peasant is not seen to the best advantage by any means. Though not physically strong, the moujik endures all kinds of privations and sufferings with the greatest patience and even apathy. On high days, his diet is meagre and coarse. Black bread and buckwheat-porridge, with green onions, and a soup made of fermented cabbage and grease or hempseed and oil, form his ordinary diet. In the region of the cattle-rearing steppes, however, the peasant is able to have plentiful supplies of meat. "Qvas," a drink made from fermented flour

and water, and tea are also consumed in immense quantities. It is, however, a herb of home-growth, and is taken very weak. The popular drink, however, is "votki," a species of coarse gin, which is to the half-starved moujik as the elixir of life, and in it he baptises every joy and drowns every sorrow.

The peasantry of Russia, in spite of the hardness of their lot, are happy, contented, and endowed with the priceless power of always looking on the bright side of things. This disposition of light-heartedness and indifference to the real abjectness of their position is doubtless the indirect cause of the harshness with which they have been treated. Had they resisted oppression by opposition, or resented it by the expression of a sullen discontent, things with them might have been far different to day. The songs of the people breathe a deep and monotonous sadness, and they expose the tone of the undercurrent of life which exists through-

out the empire. Women and girls seldom appear in the public ways except when on business or engaged on some errand. The "jemschik," or postboy, is a well-known figure in Russian social life. His light-heartedness, the dash and rapidity of his movements, his skilful manipulation of his horses, and the adroit manner in which he gets over a difficulty of broken harness or a smashed wheel, are proverbial. The means he uses to keep his cattle at full gallop—the usual pace in Russia—the blandishment he employs, the shouts, whistles, hisses, the flourishes of the whip, the throwing about of the arms, are all familiar points of a picture which all who know Russia will recognise at once. The spring dances of the Russian maidens have been described as very delightful to witness. Linked hand in hand and forming a long string, and led by a coryphæus, they move, singing and dancing, through the village, performing various intricate evolutions, and being met by the young men, at last,

dancing forward in a similar file, but having begun their evolutions at the opposite side of the village. These people have songs for every season, and it is customary for the maidens, when they cannot assemble in the open air, to meet in each other's houses to sing and celebrate their festivals, which are looked forward to by the simple-hearted people with much pleasure. Upon the whole, the life of the moujik, however repulsive in some of its aspects, is, on the whole, perhaps poetic and not without its compensations. The endless stores of tales, proverbs, traditions, and popular songs, testify to the fertility of the popular mind. There is still much to be desired, doubtless, in the direction of real intellectual progress and the cultivation of the highest and best faculties of the great peasant class of Russia. They have in them the promise of better things, and, as a nation of free people with a free voice, perhaps Russia will yet take a leading place in the making of history. There are

those who will perhaps ask this question :
“ Seeing the masses of the Czar’s subjects are tolerably content, why disturb them or desire for them any change, or unsettle their minds by any suggestions of a higher and better state of life ? ” There is something attractive in the course of letting things alone suggested by this question ; but surely, after all, there is no more humiliating or pitiable spectacle on earth than to see the captive enamoured of his fetters, to hear the ignorant proclaim that darkness is sweeter to him than light, or to see the king ruling by fear, and the priest prophesying falsely, whilst the people love to have it so.

CHAPTER VII.

ALEXANDER II.—PEACE—CORONATION.

A CONFERENCE of the Powers was assembled at Vienna (April 1855) with a view to arranging terms of peace between the belligerents. It was, however, followed by no tangible results, and the conflict raged with unabated fury on the western shores of the Crimean peninsula, without any break in the progress of hostilities except those necessary but temporary periods of truce which were from time to time required for the burial of the dead. One brilliant victory after another now rewarded the determined and methodical efforts of the Allies, and the excitement was intense at this period throughout this country as message followed message announcing the fall of towers and the capture of redoubts and the steady advance of the front line of the

besiegers in the face of a stubborn and sullen foe. The achievements of our army at this time are full of noble records of suffering and privation cheerfully endured, and deeds of daring and exploits of bravery done in the best spirit of chivalry and patriotism for the honour of England. But Europe was beginning to be weary of the war. The poorer classes in England were suffering from scarcity of bread and the high price of necessities. Russia was rapidly being drained of men and treasure, and the proposal for fresh overtures for peace by means of Austria was welcomed by both parties in the contest. The fall of Sebastopol in the spring of 1856 convinced the Czar and his advisers of the utter helplessness of their efforts to drive the invincible hosts of the invaders from their borders; and the signature of the Treaty of Paris (March 30th, 1856) was hailed with universal rejoicing throughout the length and breadth of Russia. Friendly services were interchanged between

the men of the recently-contending armies, the cloud of rapine and misery was once more lifted from Europe, and peace again reigned for a time upon the Continent, which had too long echoed with the din and clamour of war and the tramp of armed men. Alexander marked the cessation of hostilities by several acts of benignity and grace. He amnestied the Poles and permitted them to return to their homes in peace. He visited Warsaw, the capital of the conquered race, with some grave doubts as to the nature of the reception which awaited him. Precisely at the hour of eleven o'clock at night he presented himself at the gates of the city. He was delighted and surprised to see the streets and buildings, private as well as public, brilliantly illuminated and decorated in his honour. Crowds of the ancient nobility met him with torches and attended him through the principal thoroughfares with the cry of "Vive l'Empereur!" which he acknowledged with sincere and heartfelt emotion. The

following is the text of the document granting a pardon to all political offenders: —“ H.M. the Emperor, being desirous of showing his paternal clemency to those who, having unlawfully left the kingdom of Poland or the Eastern Governments of the empire, now regret their fault and wish to return to their country, and being, at the same time, willing to convince them that their previous offences are forgotten, deigns to authorise his embassies abroad to receive their petitions for the grant of a permit to return. The authorisations to re-enter their country will be immediately granted to the petitioners, and they will not be subjected to any further investigation or responsibility to the courts of justice. On the contrary, from the moment of their return they will resume their civil right and the privileges of their respective ranks; and, after three years of irreproachable conduct, they will be admissible into the public service, so as to become useful to their country and to be placed in a position to

prove the sincerity of their sentiments. Those of the emigrants who, by their proceedings, have constantly shown and still show an incorrigible hatred towards the Russian Government, are excepted from this act of his Majesty's mercy." The Emperor proceeded from Warsaw to Berlin to visit the King of Prussia, his kinsman. He there met General Williams of Kars, who had distinguished himself throughout the world by his wonderful defence of that town against the Russian attack in the late war; and the treatment of the brave but vanquished officer by the Czar was most cordial and respectful, and honourable alike to the hero and the monarch. Alexander now prepared for his solemn coronation and consecration to his high dignity in the ancient citadel and cathedral of the Kremlin at Moscow. The "Apostle of Progress," as the young Czar was regarded by the more intellectual of his subjects, decided that the event should take place on the 7th September, 1856, and invitations were issued

to and accepted by the representatives of all the chief Courts of Europe, as well as the tributary principalities and tribes of Asia. Entering Moscow amid the strains of military music, the plaudits of multitudes of all classes of his devoted subjects and the crash of the bells of four hundred churches, and surrounded by troops of cavalry and followed by the representatives of the old princely families of Russia, clad in gorgeous uniforms and adorned with golden belts studded with diamonds and aigrettes of brilliants, the young ruler might well feel a sense of pride and satisfaction as he gazed upon the pageant which was enacted in his honour. Every detail of the ceremonial attending the elevation of a prince to the dignity of a Czar of all the Russias, is carried out with befitting pomp and unparalleled magnificence. A strange mixture of Oriental and barbarous splendour and Western refinement and grace pervades the celebration of the august rites. But the supreme moment was reached in the

great formality when—amid an almost unbearable and painful stillness, in the presence of countless thousands of attendants and spectators, both within and without the Church of the Assumption—the Czar descended from his throne in the nave and proceeded, alone, in his magnificent robes of state, towards the doors of the sanctuary or holy place. The monarch was met there by the venerable archbishop of the province, who bears with all reverence the sacred vessel containing the holy anointing oil. Reaching forth the fingers of his right-hand, the prelate, with true dignity, took a golden branch, with which, after dipping it in the oil, he covered the forehead, ears, hands, eyes, and breast, of the Emperor, pronouncing the solemn words : “*Impressio doni Spiritus Sancti.*” This act it is that transforms the man from a civil to an ecclesiastical ruler : it gives him a sacerdotal power ; it makes him for ever the anointed of God, the delegate of heaven, the high priest of the holy rites, the

ambassador of Christ, the potentate at once emperor and patriarch, the surpreme and only head over all things spiritual and temporal within his dominions. The roar of artillery, the plaudits of the people, and the felicitations of the great and noble, on all sides proclaim the completion of the coronation. With tears, the peasants cast themselves before their Father, as he emerges from the sacred edifice arrayed in the imperial robe and wearing the crown of the Romanoffs. With flushed cheek and a lion's tread, Alexander II., holding the globe and sceptre in the full blaze of the sun, walks through the ranks of his enthusiastic children. The rude Cossacks of the Don, in their strange rugged dialects, call down blessings from heaven upon their Czar; and the air resounds with wild discordant shouts as tribe after tribe from the most distant provinces testify anew their allegiance and pledge their loyalty to the elect and anointed of the Lord. Such is the spirit of "Czarism" in Russia.

This reign, so bright in its opening, was destined to occupy a large space in the history of this remarkable and interesting people.

CHAPTER. VIII.

ALEXANDER II.—EMANCIPATION OF SERFS— ASSASSINATION OF THE CZAR.

BY the Treaty of Paris, Bessarabia was handed back to Turkey, the Black Sea was declared a neutral area, and the erection of arsenals or fortifications upon its shores was forbidden. The navies of both Russia and Turkey were excluded from its waters, and the power and prestige of the former Power were seriously weakened. The name of Alexander II., however, is rendered illustrious by an act of becoming clemency and sound policy which is unequalled by the deeds of the most famous sovereigns of this or any country. In 1861 a decree was issued for the emancipation of the serfs. The act was decisive, and admitted of no repeal or plausible evasions. The measure was well received, on the whole, by the nation, although its somewhat

stringent provisions entailed a considerable loss upon the wealthier classes of the empire. A large sacrifice of interests had to be made to meet the requirements of the Czar by the nobles and landowners, and in some cases great suffering resulted; but there was an almost unanimous acceptance of the Ukase by all sections of the community. Alexander proceeded to bestow a measure of political power upon the manumitted slaves, and he promulgated a scheme for district assemblies to manage local matters in their various provinces which has given great satisfaction to the agricultural and rural populations. The work of carrying through the great measure which set free at once and for over 114 millions of his subjects was undertaken by General Rostovzoff. The labour was enormous. The responsibility was incalculable and enduring. The vast area to be covered by the operations of the decree—broken up as it was by rivers, forests, and boundless plains and barren

steppes—was so considerable and the difficulties so numerous, that the stoutest hearts of the most enthusiastic statesmen might well have shrunk from carrying out the grand conception. These millions of released bondsmen had not only to be assured of their freedom, but they had to be fed and supplied with means of gaining their livelihood. For two years, the domestic serfs had to remain with their masters, and they were then at liberty to go their way unmolested. The agricultural serfs were, however, at once allowed to participate in the benefit of the ordinance. Lands were apportioned to them in each village, and a rental was attached to these, according to a scale arranged by a Government assessor. The property of the serf-villages in land was not to become at any time the property of any individual, but was acquired by the village council, or “miv,” who held it in trust for the whole of the community, and yearly distributed and redistributed the strips of arable and pasture land to the

various families, according to the number of members in each. The *miv* is responsible for all rates and taxes, each strip of land being liable for its share. These unique assemblies work harmoniously enough with the imperial officials, and they carefully avoid, at any time, the discussion of political questions—their duties being strictly confined to looking after the bridges, roads, and rivers, and educational arrangements of their own locality. Each village *miv* is presided over by an elder elected by the heads of families. The women have votes as well as the men. The village *mivs* unite to form communes; the communes unite in an assembly called the Large Commune; these, again, form a city. But there is still wanting, to complete the union with the Crown, a national and constitutional assembly elected by the suffrages of the people on the lines adopted in the formation of the popular and useful village *miv*. Although revived and endowed with fresh honours, this system of local

government prevailed before the Empire, and is really a relic of old Slavonic times. The Russians have always possessed a shadow of this democratic institution, but, strange to say, it was no bulwark against the advance of slavery in one of its worst forms. Some recent students of Russian history regard serfdom as of Polish origin and of comparatively recent growth. It is maintained that, before the Tartar invasions, it was unknown. We find, in 1125, however, that mention is made of it; and we know that the system was common enough in England and, in fact, throughout Europe. Serfs existed in this country to the time of Elizabeth, and they only gained their freedom in Germany in the early part of the present century. No doubt the Tartar incursions increased the slave classes, as the poor were driven to seek the protection of the nobles, and were gradually settled by them on their lands, and so became peasants of the soil and chattels of the lords or owners. The

majority of these could not emigrate at will, but were entirely at the disposal of their patrons, although a large number of free serfs existed in the time of Peter the Great. This evil, like most others which afflict our race, was of gradual growth. Peter ordered a census of all serfs, free and localised; and, quite unintentionally, the former were, in the return, attached to the lands of the manor upon which they were living at the date of the census. Henceforth they were to all intents and purposes no longer free. Alexander reduced effectually the wild tribes of the South, who had been only partially conquered by Nicholas, thus removing a great difficulty in the way of progress in Asia. New and vast areas of country were now rapidly added to the territory of the Czar. In 1836, Russia had not reached the eastern coast of the Caspian, and her furthest point Asia-wards was a long way north of the sea of Aral. To day the Caspian and the

Aral are both Russian. The frontiers of the White Czar have reached to Khiva, and Bokhara, and they even surround the half-savage principality of Khokand. The graphic accounts of the recent advances of the Muscovite power and influence in this direction are amongst the chief monuments of the ability, the sagacity, and the bravery of Colonel Fred Burnaby, of the Blues, who lately closed his romantic life by a soldier's death in the deserts of the Soudan. The country of the Tekke Turcomans and the fruitful valley of the Akhel Tekkes, have long been familiar with the armies of Russia, and her last outpost now looks over Merv. She is on the direct line to India ; and, Herat and Candahar passed, the Double Eagle will find nothing to interfere between it and the natural barrier to our Indian Empire.

In 1870, the Emperor announced to the Powers that he no longer felt himself bound by the clause of the Treaty of Paris which neutralised the Black Sea and prohibited

the assembling of fleets in its water or the formation of arsenals upon its shores.

In 1875, Russia—excited by the “Bulgarian atrocities,” described to the world in telling and burning words by Canon MacColl and other disinterested witnesses—declared war against Turkey, professedly to protect and succour the Christian subjects of the Mohammedan Power. The whole civilised world was moved by the startling details of the outrages which had been practised by Turks, and a Conference (1877) was suddenly called of the great Powers, at Constantinople, to consider the matter. Its decisions were, however, rejected by the Porte. The siege of Plevna—where Osman Pasha defended himself with 30,000 soldiers against 80,000 Russians, for several months, and at last capitulated with the honours of war—is one of the historical incidents of this campaign. A treaty was signed between the combatants at San Stefano in March, 1878; which was not, however, accepted kindly by

the Greeks, who viewed with uneasiness the foundation of a strong Slavonic State upon their own borders. On July 13, 1878, therefore, a Congress met at Berlin, when a treaty superseding that of San Stefano was arranged. By this document the independence of Roumania and Servia was secured; Bulgaria was transformed into a principality, and Eastern Roumelia became also an independent State; Cyprus was handed over as a loan to Great Britain; and Turkey stood despoiled of half of her European possessions.

On the 13th of March, 1881, Alexander II. perished at the hands of the assassin. For some years discontent had prevailed, and sedition had begun to infect all classes of the nation, although to a very limited extent. The good services of the Czar to the nation appear to have been forgotten. His advances on the road to political liberty and a constitutional form of Government had been unceasing if they had been somewhat tardy. His will did not always carry

its full weight with the official classes, and a terrible development of violent and sanguinary Socialism began to trouble the Government.

We shall deal with "Nihilism" in the next chapter. Here we would only say that it directed its chief efforts at the life of the Czar, but for some time without success. On Sunday, the 13th of March, 1881, however, he was returning from the review of his Guards, and, surrounded by his ever-faithful Cossack regiment, was dashing through the streets of St. Petersburg on his return to the palace. A bomb was thrown by the anarchists beneath his carriage, and both legs of the Emperor were blown away. He was fearfully injured in the body and face, and after a few hours of great suffering he passed away in the midst of shadows domestic and national which had gathered about the latter years of a life which opened with so much promise and with every prospect of usefulness and honour.

CHAPTER IX.

SKETCHES OF ST. PETERSBURG—MOSCOW—THE FAMOUS FAIR OF NOVGOROD.

THE Czar of All the Russias rejoices in the possession of two capitals—Moscow, the ancient and venerated seat of ecclesiastical authority, almost in the centre of the country; and the beautiful but modern city of St. Petersburg, on the banks of the Neva.

The advent into the country of strangers even of well-assured respectability is jealously watched by the authorities, and, at the last stage of the journey from London before reaching Russian soil, we prepared ourselves and our baggage for a thorough and not particularly polite overhauling, which we had been warned at the British Consulate we might expect at the first frontier-town. After several weary hours, which we had beguiled by trying to bring

back to memory all the information we had gleaned up from every source as to the aspect of the land and the character of the people we were about to visit, our reverie was rudely interrupted by the sudden stoppage of the train and the appearance of an individual of most unprepossessing aspect who turned out to be the Customs-officer. It was a cold sleety day in opening spring, and we felt keenly the annoyance of having to open our trunks and take out each article and place it for inspection beneath the gaze of the stern, bearded official who evidently regarded every stranger as a sworn enemy to the authority of his imperial master and a concealer of contraband goods somewhere in his baggage or about his person. There is now no ordeal to which travellers for pleasure or profit are subjected in Europe which approaches in unpleasant features the rigorous search of the Russian Excise. It is well that passengers should, therefore, be prepared to undergo this scrutiny and to reply to all questions, personal or otherwise,

fearlessly and unfalteringly, or they may find themselves, although quite innocent of any sinister intents, conveyed to a prison and detained for an unlimited period, probably, whilst inquiries are being made about them. The spy-system in Russia has reached the perfection of a fine-art. A friend of mine recently related his experiences of this iniquitous institution, which vividly illustrate the present condition of affairs in the country and the utter absence of confidence in the public which prevails amongst the officials of the empire. This gentleman was engaged to be married to the daughter of a manager of a large factory near Novgorod. He left London on a Monday by the night express, crossed to Belgium, and was on his way to his wedding which was fixed for the Friday of the same week. All went well till the border-line which divides Germany and Russia was reached. Judge of his mortification when he found himself hurried off, for no explainable reason, to the office of the chief of the

secret police, surrounded by a crowd of gaping dirty-faced moujiks and a posse of constables who were furiously gesticulating and uttering strange guttural sounds and fiercely pushing their victim before them through the streets in the most brutal manner. Not in the best of tempers and with disordered raiment, he stood before the magistrate, who asked him a string of questions, and, after an hour or two of weariness and excitement, remanded him for a week, that an interpreter might attend the examinations and whilst secret investigations were made concerning the wretched captive. My friend, whose agony of mind may be imagined, begged to be allowed to telegraph to Novgorod or to send a letter to the English Consul at Riga, but all was in vain. He was told that no communications with possible confederates could be allowed. He was to remain at least a week there on remand—that was the magisterial decision; and remain he did. Meanwhile, the non-arrival of any tidings of her betrothed

caused the young and anxious bride-expectant to fear that a cloud had arisen between them, and that her swain was faithless. His arrival a week after the appointed date, and his miserable appearance together with a description of the treatment he had received at the hands of the secret police, caused quite a consternation in the district; but no apology was offered by the central authorities for the outrage. The reply to a complaint was that *the gentleman had been mistaken in the first place for someone else*. The story of the literary gentleman who was thrust out of the country in which he had resided for years, at a day's notice, because he had a copy of Darwin's works in his bookcase, would seem incredible if the facts had not been vouched for by unimpeachable authority. Having, then, passed through the ordeal of the Customs with safety, we congratulated ourselves and one another, and then proceeded to look about us. The change from European civilisation to

Oriental profuseness and elaborate shabbiness was complete. We were surrounded by new races, antique costumes, entirely fresh experiences, and languages as strange as the whole scene was unique. We were surprised at the clean faces and white garments of the poorer classes, after what we had so often read of their general frowsiness and oleaginousness. The shirt-like vestment of the moujik, bound with a scarf of scarlet, the full trousers thrust into high boots, and the dark fur cap, made up a costume which is not altogether unpleasing or unsuitable to the climate and habits of the people. There was the usual curious polyglot multitude of all nations and kindreds and tongues and peoples at the Terminus; whilst the crowd was relieved somewhat of its sombre hue by the gleam of military uniforms and the bright colours of the robes of the women and the numerous parties of ecclesiastics who wended their way through the busy chattering throng with flowing beards and huge

pectoral crosses suspended from their necks. Germans, and Poles, and Frenchmen, and English visitors were moving hither and thither in goodly numbers. A thoughtful dignity characterises the merchant; and the ubiquitous Jewish moneychanger, who gives you rouble-notes for gold, is at once prominent on account of the poverty-stricken air which he affects and the greed which is written upon every feature of his dark and Israelitish face. The rouble-note is the prevailing currency in the dominions of the Czar. There is a tradition concerning silver roubles (worth about 2s. 1d.), but few persons have actually had any practical acquaintance with the coin. The rate of exchange varies; and you will do well to discover it beforehand, or you may find yourself getting considerably the worst of the bargain with the peccant son of Abraham. The presence in the train of a huge stove is an innovation which at once strikes the visitor from the West. It is constructed so as to con-

sume huge blocks of wood, and this circumstance reminds the stranger that he is journeying through a country which boasts perhaps the finest and most extensive forests in the world. There is nothing to arrest the attention of the passenger on his way to the capital on the Neva—except, perhaps, the unvaried level of the district which he traverses. As far as the eye can reach, nothing of more than ordinary interest appears except here and there when the eye rests upon a gaudily-painted village-spire or the bright foliage and beautiful symmetry of some lord of the wood who lifts his proud head far above his fellows and flings out his graceful branches to the winds with all the air of conscious sovereignty. The journey becomes tedious, and there is a positive relief in the periodical appearance of the guard, bearded and booted and furred, with a tray of hot tea, which is served in glasses with a slice of lemon floating on the surface. Novgorod—once the seat of

Russian power and the cradle of its national life, but now only a sleepy country-town for a great part of every year—is left behind; and, after some suspense, the first far-off view of the youngest capital in Europe breaks upon us. The chief feature in the distance is the burnished and flashing dome of the great Cathedral of St. Basil, which is covered with golden plates said to be worth £50,000. The energy and patience with which this city was founded in the centre of a dismal swamp, and whilst the site was actually within the territory of his enemies, testify in a striking manner to the peculiar disposition of Peter the Great for attempting seemingly-impossible tasks. In the face of the most determined advice from friends and ministers, from engineers and politicians, he persevered in his plan of making a window through which he could look, as he said, upon Western Europe. The capital occupies both banks of the Neva, and is composed chiefly of wood.

The width of its streets, the magnificence of its palaces, and the number of its churches, together with the extent of its vast squares, render it for ever one of the most striking cities on the Continent. In size, it is larger than London; and it is twenty miles in circumference. The population consists of twice as many men as women, and at various times in its history it has suffered from devastating floods which have swept away in one night thousands of the population. The Winter Palace (700 feet long, with its enormous quadrangle capable of holding 6,000 persons) and the Church of St. Izak (which contains the famous picture which is supposed to have been wafted through the air from Kasan, a distance of 750 miles, are amongst the most celebrated buildings of the city. An object of great interest, to those who are fond of dwelling upon the past, is preserved with great care at St. Petersburg. This is the hut of wood in which Peter himself resided

during the progress of the work of erecting the town. It contains his own "ikon," or religious picture, now black and dim with years, but before which a lamp is kept continually burning. The ship in which the great Czar first served, and at the construction of which he is said to have himself assisted, is also carefully preserved; and the splendid equestrian statue of its founder, which forms one of the chief ornaments of the city, remains to keep alive the memory and exploits of one of the most remarkable men of his own or any age.

The nobles are not politically powerful: their functions are rather social than administrative. The dominant class appears to be that which is composed of the Government representatives and officials. These combine together for offensive and defensive purposes, and are the bane of the community. They oppress the poor and are open to bribery and corruption from the highest to the lowest grades. They are called "Tchininovniks" or "Tchinds," and are hated and dreaded by

the industrious and capital-earning agricultural class, which is perhaps the best-conducted and most praiseworthy section of the population. They are loyal to the central authority; they cherish a devotion, which is undisturbed by the teaching of agitators or the specious arguments of the Nihilists, for the person of their Czar, and which is constantly exhibiting itself in the sacrifices they are called upon to make to sustain the almost-bankrupt exchequer of the State. They have no knowledge of the science of politics, and they are quite indifferent to the intrigues of party or the duplicity of professional reformers. They know that, whereas they were once in bonds and serfs of the soil, they in 1863, by the grace and favour of Alexander II., were made free, and were endowed with a plot of ground and the liberty to enjoy in a modest way the fruit of their own toil. They therefore, if entrusted with full political power, would vote for the Imperial candidates to-morrow or for the man who would

promise to support most firmly the will and action of their autocratic ruler. In Poland, also, strange as it may appear, we find the same feeling of attachment to the creed of Czarism. Doubtless, the wise and industrious population of that dependency now prefer the despotic government of the Czar to the miserable state of penury and oppression which would be their lot if again placed under the authority of their own lords and former masters. In towns, political feelings run high and greater interest is shown in public questions. But there is an absence of anti-State ideas to a great extent even in the large centres of industry; and the general feeling is rather in favour of developing what is good in old Muscovite institutions than to introduce any of the more drastic and novel measures and institutions of Western reformers.

Moscow.—The four hundred miles of diversified country which lies between the two capitals, present an aspect thoroughly

Russian. The huts of the peasantry—composed of rough logs of timber, and caulked after the manner of a ship's deck with tow and surrounded by strips and patches of party-coloured land—do not compare favourably with the cottage-homes of England. The residences of the upper classes are often very well built and fairly comfortable in their internal arrangements, if we except the invariable stove in the centre of the room, which we could never really regard as an accessory to comfort. Each room has its ikon, or picture of some patron saint. To this each member of the household bows when passing. The hostess takes in the ladies to dinner and the host the gentlemen—a custom which seems strangely awkward to us, somehow. The sexes are also divided at the tables—the gentlemen facing the ladies instead of, as at home, being carefully intermingled at the social board. Another custom struck us as curious. A glass of spirit and a sandwich or biscuit are offered to each guest before

actually sitting down to the great business of dining. Music is cultivated in Russian houses, charades and whist are also popular amusements; and, must it be said, smoking is not unfashionable amongst the ladies, who also have a quaint practice of kissing upon the shoulder, instead of upon the cheek, when respect as from an inferior to a superior is intended to be shown. The moujik salutes his master by removing his cap and bending his body slowly and profoundly, a more graceful greeting, certainly, than twisting the forelock, which, happily, is ceasing to be the habit of the English labourer. There is an old saying that a squirrel can pass from St. Petersburg to Moscow without touching the ground, on account of the density of the woods. We were amused to see bed-pillows put into the carriages, by some of the more thoughtful passengers, previous to leaving the Neva for the south; but we soon saw the wisdom of this provision against bodily fatigue induced by a weary, uneventful journey through a

flat and not particularly interesting district which was covered almost entirely with park-like little forests of beech and larch. The first view of the ancient stronghold of the Dukes of Muscovy is very striking. The chief feature of the outline is the collection of buildings sacred and secular which are familiar to us as the Kremlin. This title is not peculiar to this city, however, as other towns of inferior dignity have their kremlins. The meaning of the term merely is that there are many structures united in one, as the Acropolis of Athens, the Capitol of Rome, or the Acro-Corinthus of Corinth. From the earliest times, the power of the kingdom, especially in its religious aspect, has centred round Moscow. The population is about 600,000, and all the old families have residences in the precincts of the town. It boasts of a roll containing the record of no less than twenty-two Metropolitans and eleven Patriarchs. The Russians are a religious people, much given to the ritual observances of their faith ;

and they are very much under the direction of the priests of the Church, who take care to encourage in their flocks a decided mistrust of everything which comes to the country from the West. It was chiefly to Ivan the Great that the early capital owed its magnificence and fame. The temple erected by him is still a marvel of architectural skill and rude structural beauty. The history of the venerable city has been a chequered one. At times held by the Tartar Khans, at other periods besieged by the armies of the West, the seat of the Metropolitan, the home of the Sacred Patriarchs, and the centre of nationality of a vast and heterogeneous kingdom, it has again and again risen from its ruins to fresh life and importance. It is at present the scene of the cotton-manufacturing industry which has taken firm root in the district, and which will supply the enormous demands of the new trade-routes which the pioneers of Russian progress are opening out right through the middle of

Asia to the Pacific and Indian Oceans. The tombs of all the Sovereigns down to Peter the Great are within the walls of the Kremlin ; and it proudly comforts itself, in its decline, with the fact that no alien army has ever been able to effect a fixed lodgment within its walls, which are consecrated to the protection and defence of Russian ideas and the Russian faith. The public opinion of this district is always very powerful, and has great weight with the rulers of the country. Petersburg is the head of Russia, but Moscow is still its heart.

Nijni Novgorod is the active hand, perhaps, of the body of which we have just said that Moscow is the heart and the city of Peter the Great the head. Its situation gives to Novgorod a more than usual importance, as it has rendered it easy of access for the whole of the East. Standing between the Volga and the Oka, it at once strikes us as exactly adapted by position for the great trade-mart of Eastern

Europe and Western Asia. For centuries, an annual fair, which gradually increased in importance with the passage of years, was held somewhere on the banks of the Volga. In 1816, however, the market was removed to its present location. At that period the value of the business done during the two months of the fair was £5,000,000. It has now reached the extraordinary sum of £20,000,000 annually. The scene is described as a most exciting and remarkable one. Upon a flat marshy plain are streets of booths and tents and shops of stone or brick and wood. These erections cover a distance of some miles in extent, and are filled with merchandise from the extreme points of both Continents. The products of the looms of Manchester and the potteries of Staffordshire are seen side by side with the inlaid work of Japan, the shawls of Cashmere, and the jewellery of India. Merchants and travellers congregate from all the States of Asia and Central Europe; and the mass of moving

colour and the discord of a thousand dialects and languages, produce an effect of pleasing bewilderment upon the spectator which recalls the sensations experienced by a stranger on landing for the first time upon the quay in the beautiful harbour of the Mauritius. The placid Hindoo bargains with the florid German, side by side with a group which is probably made up of Chinese, Finns, Poles, and Turks. At the close of the fair, the vast assemblage disperses along the routes of the two rivers, and Novgorod resumes its normal condition of silence and repose. Years before the first Saxon invasion of Britain, Novgorod was a flourishing city, with its own Government and special privileges. In 862, it was one of the great commercial republics of Western Europe. It had its own popular assembly; and by its invitation, as already stated, Ruric the Norman first set foot upon Russian soil. For some centuries the great emporium of commerce held its own as the rallying-point of the

national life ; but eventually it gave place to Moscow, which city in a measure has, in the order of things, gradually given place to St. Petersburg.

CHAPTER X.

EXTENSION OF THE EMPIRE.

DIVERGENT and strangely-contradictory opinions on all things Russian are the rule both in England and abroad. Some authorities maintain that the sceptre of the Czars is wielded over a progressive and improving dominion; others declare that Russia is rather retracing her steps, or at least that she is making no advance towards liberty and enlightenment and the intelligent use of her enormous resources. But history has never really given us a more remarkable instance of national energy, and of the marvellous rise of a State from a condition of obscurity to a place amongst the great Powers, than is afforded by the narrative of Russian aggression and extension. Little more than a hundred years ago, the country was almost unknown. The barbarians of the

North, the descendants of the Scythians and a crowd of other races, were outside the pale of civilisation altogether. To-day the world gives good heed to the edicts of the Autocrat of the Neva. There can be no doubt that the strength of the nation lies in the area around Moscow, and that all ideas distinctly Russian originate there, and are gradually carried thence to the farthest extremities of the vast empire. This district may roughly be described as lying between Smolensk and Viatka, and the Gulf of Onega and the country of the Don Cossacks. This was the Russia of Ivan the Terrible (the Great) previous to the addition of the rich province of Kazan to the West. This tract of country—the very heart of the empire, the centre of its most ancient and glorious traditions, and the scene of its most remarkable scenes and vicissitudes, the Russia of the Russians—was the original principality of the Dukes of Moscow (Muscovy) who gained for themselves imperishable fame by their triumphant

defeat of the Tartars. For the long period of years in her early history when the West was still barred and closed to the armies of the Czar, the chief field of Russian conquest was in the North, where province after province was added to the already extensive Moscovite kingdom. Ivan pushed forward the boundary-line so as to include Astrachan as well as Kazan, and he was the first monarch to plant the Russian standard beside the mysterious waters of the Caspian Sea. He also opened a road to the inhospitable plains and rugged mountain-passes of Siberia and established a permanent hold upon that district destined to become notorious in the after-history of the empire as the home of political exiles and criminals of all classes whose presence east of the Ural might be obnoxious to the ruling powers. Strange to say, Russia possessed no outlet to the sea till the time of Peter the Great. That adventurous and astute prince at once saw the necessity for a coast-line which would give him

access to the ocean without having to cross the territory of neighbouring monarchies, and he seized upon the Baltic provinces and, with characteristic ardour, took possession of the then almost inaccessible peninsula of Kamschatka and the northern shore of the important sea of Okotsk, in the Pacific Ocean. Elizabeth secured Finland; Ann wrested from Turkey a large strip of valuable country bordered by the rivers Dnieper and Bug ; whilst Catherine II. annexed the Crimea and Poland. The ruling passion of the Russ has ever been this "land-hunger." It is even now said that the condition of things in the country would be intolerable, that flames of revolution would burst forth and consume to-morrow all that is desirable and worth preserving, were it not that the attention of the military and official classes is constantly and craftily kept fastened upon the idea of foreign conquests. The story that the name of India rings like the peal of his marriage-bells in the ears of the Cossack in his rough bivouac on the banks

of the Don, is still repeated by all visitors to the neighbourhood of the Caspian. The Emperor who wishes for peace, that the energies of the people may be devoted without distraction to the development of commercial industries and the pursuit of knowledge, is not his own master. He is obliged to adopt a warlike attitude, and must ever seem to be pressing on to fresh conquests. Any sign of hesitation or show of weakness in this primary article of national policy would at once plunge the country into a thousand difficulties and complications. Plots against his life, combinations to overthrow his power, and secret leagues would threaten him on all sides ; and his death by assassination would be not only probable but certain. We have doubtless now reached a most important stage in the history of this great people. That vast military operations are contemplated by the Russian Executive, sooner or later, there can be no shadow of doubt. Her strategic position is unparalleled. She

can strike east or west as it suits her purposes best. With one hand upon Asia and the other arm reaching over a large portion of Europe, with seaboards facing both the Atlantic and the Pacific, with inexhaustible forests of fine timber, rich mineral deposits, a widely-scattered but hardy peasantry, and semi-religious national ideas and traditions, she will prove a formidable opponent to any Power which may feel called upon to interfere with her designs or to arrest the march of her battalions. At the same time, we may be reassured by the reflection that the time is past—we trust never to return—when one large military Power, however formidable or unscrupulous, can hope to dominate and dictate terms to the world. The only abiding triumphs are those which are secured by a well-directed commerce and friendly cultivation of amicable relations with other States, and the recognition of mutual obligations to further the interests of humanity as a whole rather than to seek to promote

merely the elevation of a class or the aggrandisement of a clan. Reciprocity of treaty enactments, a cordial and candid acknowledgment of the dependency of States upon each other if their mutual good is to be permanently ensured, a generous emulation in the framing of wise domestic laws, a faithful and solemn acceptance of the cardinal doctrine that the chief end of a government should be to secure the comfort and happiness and enlightenment of every individual within its borders—these are measures and methods of conduct which invariably secure for the nation as well, as the individual, a true and lasting security and an honourable and enviable place amongst the wisest and greatest peoples of the earth. The ancient dynasties of Rome and Greece were established by the sword, and they perished by the sword. The France of Napoleon was thirsty for military prestige and the glory which is born of battles and sieges. She has not yet recovered from the effects of an infatuation

which at length betrayed her and left her humbled and crushed—a spectacle of compassion to Europe and the world.

CHAPTER XI.

ALEXANDER III.—NIHILISM.

THE late Emperor was succeeded by his second son, who assumed the title of Alexander III., March 13, 1881. He had married, in November, 1866, the charming Princess Dagmar, daughter of the King of Denmark and sister to the Princess of Wales and the reigning King of the Greeks. The Princess had been betrothed to the elder brother of the new Czar, but, as he died before the assassination of his father, she was espoused with great pomp to the next heir in succession to the throne of all the Russias. The heir-apparent is the Grand Duke Nicholas, born May 18, 1868. The early years of the present reign have been so far full of anxiety and unrest to the young monarch. Several formidable conspiracies have been discovered against his life, and numbers of women as well as men,

and even some of his most trusted officials, have been executed or banished for complicity in plots against his person. So far the evil machinations and diabolical ingenuity of his implacable enemies have been frustrated—but at the cost of all personal comfort or freedom of movement on the part of the imperial family. Watched and guarded on every side, with mistrust in the palace, the council, and the social circle, the life of the Czar of All the Russias has been far from enviable. It is difficult, in a brief treatise, to probe to the depths the causes which have conduced to the present unhappy condition of things in Russia. The general state of the population, and especially of the agricultural districts, is better than at any past period of their history—personal liberty is secured, and some amount of political power has been entrusted to the people. The reforms instituted by the late Czar are bringing forth fruit in a gradual enlightenment of the masses. But there remains the fact to

be faced that the most terrible and subtle phase of modern anarchy and perverted socialism is of Russian growth and, in every sense, of Russian origin. *Nihilism* has during the past few years exercised a terrorism over the continent of Europe which is as far-reaching as the cause itself is perplexing and profound. It is almost impossible to approach the leaders of the Nihilists, at least so as to become acquainted with the particular tenets and leading principles of their platform. They profess broadly to act in the interests of the poor by warring upon the governing classes. Their great weapon is secret assassination and their favourite victims the reigning families of Europe. The only formulated document which contains a statement of their principles is that which is known as the Manifesto of Bakunin which was published in 1868. The whole thing reads more like a statement designedly drawn up to deceive the public as to their real objects than as a serious declaration of the

deliberate intentions of sane men. According to this manifesto of the secret party, there is to be no law, no God, no religion, no ruling power, no authority, no superiority of classes: "Nihil!" Nothing! There are, it maintains, two great streams of delusion and falsehood flooding men's minds with error and confusion:—First, God; second, Right. These ideas must be speedily and effectually eradicated from the minds of men before happiness and peace can be the portion of all classes everywhere. The fallacy of God, they declare, is the invention, the creature, the puppet of the priest; the delusion of Right, the creation of the strong and the rich. They desire to free the world from the bondage of knowledge, civilisation, property, marriage, morality, justice—which are, it is maintained, mere unwholesome excrescences of fungous growth which derive their foul nourishment from the two great and dominant deceits of the age. Happiness, they assert, is to be our only law for

the guidance of our conduct. The world is held together as a conglomeration of atoms by the natural laws of gravity and centralisation. Everything which society values as at present constituted the Nihilist would sweep away. If we accept the Manifesto of Bakunin in its entirety as a serious statement, we see at once that the Nihilist has no place within the borders of civilised communities. The professors of these tenets, which are clearly adverse to the happiness and progress of the race, are fortunately a small body. They are, however, daring, cultivated, unselfish, and well supplied with funds which they do not hesitate to employ lavishly when occasion requires. The ramifications of their organisation have penetrated to every capital in the civilised world; and it is believed that they have designs ultimately upon the whole of the regal families, and are only waiting for the change of current opinion and for favourable opportunities for carrying out their nefarious schemes in all their fulness.

The assassination of sovereigns, they regard as merely the execution of criminals. The decrees of their tribunals and the covert and clandestine nature of all their operations have caused them to be profoundly hated, however, by all lovers of political and social freedom. And, in dismissing this unhappy subject, perhaps we are justified in saying that, as a body, the Nihilists are thoroughly detested and disliked by the great majority of the Russian nation.

The great need of Russia is more liberty and a greater increase of confidence between Czar and people. The barbaric censorship of the press is one of the blots upon the present administration in Russia. Press offences are painfully common, and the administration of justice in these cases is criminally slow and uncertain. Men and women have been shut up for years and subjected to the greatest indignities, without ever being brought to trial, for hypothetical literary offences against law and order. The forcible expulsion of the Jews

from the dominions of the Czar was also a terrible mistake in the eyes of Europe. Popular indignation was aroused to fever-heat by the stories of persecution and Jew hunting and baiting which seemed to be the popular amusement in Russia a few years ago. The rights of property were ignored and outrages tolerated in a way which was highly prejudicial to the popularity of the Czar and his Ministers ; and even now the public are startled by the report of high-handed and arbitrary proceedings towards aliens which are unworthy, to say the least, of a great and strong and progressive nationality such as Russia has become. The recent revelations of the condition of the prisons of the country, from the graphic pen of Stephnaik, are most probably somewhat overdrawn ; but there is truth in them. The hellish torture of the knout was abolished by the late Czar in 1868. But other methods of dragging from the victims confessions of crime or disloyalty, are still too frequently in use in

the secret chambers of Russian fortresses. The deportation of suspects is of daily occurrence; and the subjection of frail women and even girls to the cruellest pain, in order to extract from them information which they only are supposed to possess of the plans of the enemies of social order and the reigning dynasty, is a practice which can only be abhorred and detested by all civilised nations. The schools are excellent, but they are under the strict control of the Government, who exercise a censorship over the teachers and subjects taught which is as intolerable as it is ridiculous and injurious to the best interests of the country. The coronation of Alexander III., which had been deferred from time to time, was eventually proceeded with at Moscow with the usual elaborate ceremonial detail in 1883, and was attended by representatives of all the Courts of Europe. The Prince of Wales represented England; he was accompanied to Moscow by the Duke of Edinburgh, the brother-in-law of the New Czar, and a distinguished

suite. The whole proceedings were carried out without a catastrophe and without the omission of any important element of the pageant. It is the proud boast of the Russian monarch that (with the exception of the American territory ceded to the United States for a money-equivalent in 1867) he reigns over every inch of ground and every subject gained for Russia by the energy and ceaseless aggression of his illustrious predecessors. From the obscure commercial centre of Novgorod has arisen the most extensive empire which the world has ever seen; and Russia—with its enormous capacity for commercial enterprise; with its central position with regard to Eastern Asia and Western Europe; with its boundless mineral resources, its facilities for the development of agricultural and mechanical industry—bears the promise of a magnificent and opulent future which even its bitterest and most relentless foes must acknowledge is awaiting it in the years which lie before it.

INDEX.

	PAGE
ADRIANOPLE	31
AFGHANISTAN	1, 32
AFRICA	3
ALEXANDER I.	19, 23, 24, 27
ALEXANDER II.	39, 53, 56, 59, 61, 69
ALEXANDER III.	100
ALLIANCE, HOLY	28
ANN	17
ASIA, CENTRAL	1, 23
AUSTERLITZ	23
AUSTRIA	23
AZOF	13
BASCHKIVES	4
BERLIN CONGRESS	69
BESSARABIA	24
BLACK SEA	38, 61, 67
BORODINO	25
BRITISH INDIA	23, 32, 67
BULGARIAN ATROCITIES	68
BURNABY, COL. FRED	67
BYRON	21
CANDAHAR	67
CASPIAN	66, 96

	PAGE
CATHERINE I.	14
CATHERINE II.	18, 21
CATHOLICS, GREEK	3, 41
CATHOLICS, ROMAN	3
CHARLES XII.	14
CLERICAL PARTY	13
CONSTANTINOPLE	9
COSSACKS	31, 59, 93
CRIMEAN WAR	35
CZARISM	5, 59, 83
DON JUAN	21
EASTERN QUESTION	2, 10
EGBERT OF WESSEX	6
ELIZABETH	17
EUROPEAN LEAGUE	22
FINE	4, 24
FRANCE	22
FRIEDLAND	24
GERMANS	4
GORTSCHAKOFF	36
GRECIAN EMPIRE	9
HEPTARCHY	6
HERAT	1, 32, 67
ISMAIL	21
IVAN THE GREAT	8
IVAN IV.	17
JASSY	16
JEWS	34, 105

Index. 111

	PAGE
KHIVA	67
KREMLIN	25, 26, 56, 86, 88
LITHUANIANS	4
MANIFESTO OF BAKUNIN	102
MARIENBURG	15
MENSCHIKOFF NOTE	36
MERV	67
MICHAEL ROMANOFF	12, 26, 30, 59
MIV	63
MOHAMMEDANS	3
MOLDAVIA	20, 24
MOSCOW	14, 25, 27, 44, 56, 83, 88, 107
MOUJIK	76
NAPOLEON BONAPARTE	22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 98
NICHOLAS	23, 29, 30, 32, 33, 37
NIHILISM	70, 82, 100, 102
NIJNI NOVGOROD	73, 88, 108
NOVGOROD	78
OLD BELIEVERS	42
PARIS, TREATY OF	53, 67
PAUL	19, 22
PEASANTRY	48
PETER THE GREAT	12, 15, 16, 27, 42, 79
PETER II.	17
PETER III.	17, 13
PLEVNA	68
POLAND	21, 38, 83
POLES	4, 54
POLICE	74

	PAGE
POTEMSKIA	21
PROTESTANTS	3
PULTOWA	14
QVAS	47
ROUBLES	77
RURIC THE NORMAN	6, 26, 90
RUSSIAN EXCISE	72
ST. PETERSBURG	71, 80
SAN STEFANO TREATY	68
SEBASTOPOL	37, 38
SEKES	61, 65, 82
SIBERIA	31, 94
SOUDAN	1
STEPHNAIK	106
SUWARROW	21
TARTARS	8, 17, 20, 65, 87, 94
TURKS	4, 9, 13, 31
VIENNA CONFERENCE	32
VOTKI	48
WALLACHIA	20, 24

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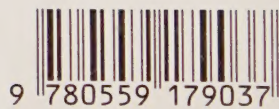
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